

SPEAK UP

Here's how these residents of Aldersgate Retirement Community in Meridian answered the question, "What's your best advice to men and women in the active-duty military, Guard and Reserves serving in the Middle East — and their families?"

"Keep close contact with friends and relatives both here and abroad. Your spiritual leaders of all faiths are ready and waiting to help. Use them. Church services at home and on the front line are big morale builders ...

"Most of you joined the civilian armed forces when war was not in the immediate future. But our world turned upside down. I am proud of the way families said a fond farewell and our soldiers — men and women — accepted your responsibility and are doing your best to comply with orders from above.

"That takes courage, dedication, alertness and good old 'American Spirit.' Thank you, or as my dear departed wife would say, 'Thank you, thank you, thank you!'"



Coleman

Otto Coleman

"We all should pray constantly for your continued safety."

Josephine Bradshaw

"A lot of prayer and a watchful eye."

J.W. Bradshaw

"I have found that the scripture found in Proverbs 3:6 helps me through trials, tribulations, moments of decision and just every situation in life: 'In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your path.' Isn't that wonderful? He will see you through each situation that arises, if you just let Him!"

Bennie Harris



Mitchell

"Try to keep busy."

Sadie Dalton

"Take pride in what you are doing, knowing you are setting an example for other young men and women who will serve after you, and remember our prayers are with you."

Dorothy Mitchell

"Just pray."

Marcelene Kyle

"Live each day at a time. That is what we are promised. Be thankful for our blessings."

Connie Byers

"Pray and give yourself to God. God is on His throne and in His time will do what is best for us all."

Kresses Holloway

"Put your best foot forward, stay close to the Lord, and have faith in Him who is in control of everything that's being done in this wartime and that it will be done for His honor and glory, and our good. Be a good example to those with whom you come in contact."

Polly Sansing



Sansing

Deborah Swann compiled this Speak Up question. She is the program director at Aldersgate Retirement Community and has had the privilege of working with the elders at Aldersgate for almost 17 years.

He didn't have to go, but he wanted to ...

As supervisor for the Mississippi Army National Guard's Family Assistance Center at Key Field in Meridian, Ricky M. Posey acts as an intermediary for more than 300 families in Lauderdale, Clarke, Jasper, Newton, Scott and Smith counties whose family members include deployed Guardsmen.

He served in the Army Guard for 37 years, including 34 as supply sergeant for the 150th Combat Engineer Battalion at Key Field in Meridian. He retired in February 2004, and took up new duties with the Family Assistance Center.

Ricky submitted this "Bragging Rights" story about Sgt. Winford W. Walker of the 150th — a nurse and combat medic who had retired, but re-enlisted when his country needed him.

By Ricky Posey

special to The Star

When I thought about writing this article, I had lots of emotions about the person I had in mind.

I served 37 years in the 150th Combat Engineer Battalion and still have many longtime friends in the unit. I also have many longtime friends in Company G, 185th Aviation Group, who are serving in Balad, Iraq.

However, one name kept coming back to my mind because of the circumstances involved.

I want to brag on Winford W. Walker because of his desire to serve his country. He had previously served on active duty with the Army, as well as in the Army National Guard for about 10 years. He was deployed to Bosnia as well as other areas around the world.

About two years ago, Winford got out of the Army National Guard to take a very good job at a hospital in New Orleans, La.

When he heard that the 150th Combat Engineer Battalion had been mobilized, he called me to see how much money he would make on active duty in a combat zone. He knew then that he wanted to join back up and go to Iraq with his friends in his old unit.

Every few days, Winford



SUBMITTED PHOTO

MOBILIZATION CENTER

Sgt. Winford W. Walker, right, trains at Camp Shelby after he re-enlisted in the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion — and shortly before he shipped out to Iraq. The man he is talking with is Lt. Col. Roy Robinson, statewide commander of all of the 150th's units in Meridian, Carthage, Quitman, Lucedale, Houston and Okolona.

would call me to check on how much money he would be paid for Basic Allowance for Housing or Basic Allowance for Subsistence or Hazardous Duty pay.

He was very sincere in his desire to serve our country but, at the same time, he didn't want to leave his family in a financial bind. After determining that his family could live on what the military would pay him, he joined 150th Combat Engineer Battalion to be deployed to Iraq with the unit.

He didn't have to volunteer because he has served his time, but he wanted to go.

This is just one of many stories I could tell you about the soldiers of the 150th and Company G. I'm proud of Winford and every one of the soldiers in these units. These soldiers are our heroes, so let's honor them as heroes — rather than drug-infested baseball players or high-tempered basketball players.

Danny didn't think twice

Patricia Jones submitted this "Bragging Rights" story about her son, 28-year-old Sgt. Danny C. Jones of the Mississippi Army National Guard's 150th Combat Engineer Battalion.

By Patricia Jones

special to The Star

My son, Danny, has been in the National Guard for 10 years. He first joined in honor of his father, who died in 1991.

In 2003, Danny was activated for Homeland Security. He spent a little over a year at Fort Bliss, Texas. While on active duty, he realized how much he loved the military and how much he respected what it stands for. Danny came home from Fort Bliss in July 2004 and, in September, he was asked about going active again to go to Iraq.

Danny didn't even have to think about it before he said he would go.

When Danny came home that day to tell me that he was going to Iraq, he said that he felt it was his honor-bound duty to go. Danny told me when he was home on leave for Christmas that he believed his father and grandfather would be proud of him for going.

I don't know about them, but I know that I'm very proud of my son. I hope that everyone who reads these letters will remember to pray for our boys in the military every day.